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(71) Applicant: SRS LABS, INC. [US/US]; 2909 Daimler Street, Santa Ana, CA 92705 (US).

(72) Inventor: KLAYMAN, Arnold, I.; 16821 Phelps Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92649 (US).

(74) Agent: NATAUPSKY, Steven, J.; Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, Suite 1600, 620 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92680 (US).

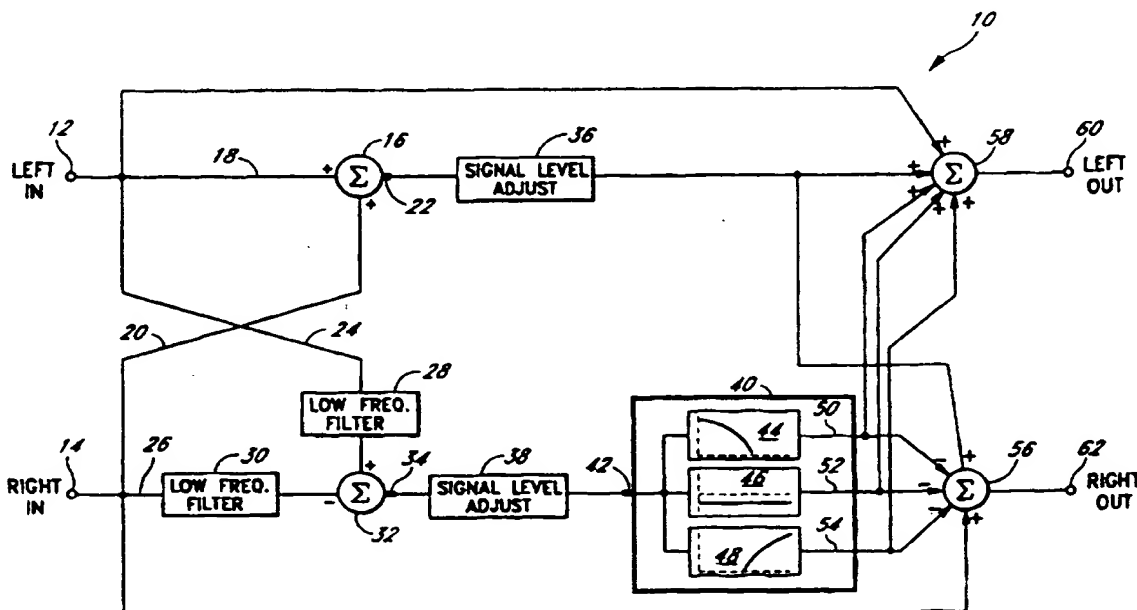
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(54) Title: STEREO ENHANCEMENT SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

A stereo enhancement system processes the difference signal component generated from a pair of left and right input signals to create broadened stereo image reproduced through a pair of speakers or through a surround sound system. Processing of the difference signal component occurs through equalization characterized by amplification of the low and high range of auditory frequencies. The processed difference signal is combined with a sum signal, generated from the left and right input signals, and the original left and right input signals to create enhanced left and right output signals.

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STEREO ENHANCEMENT SYSTEM

Field of the Invention

5 This invention relates generally to audio enhancement systems, and especially those systems and methods designed to improve the realism of stereo sound reproduction. More particularly, this invention relates to apparatus for broadening the sound image created from amplification of stereo signals through a pair of loudspeakers, without introducing unnatural phase-shift or time-delays within the stereo signals.

Background of the Invention

10 Those actively involved in audio or audio-visual industries have continually strived to overcome the imperfections of reproduced sound. Presently, with the onslaught of interactive multimedia computer systems, and other audio-visual advances, the concern over audio quality has heightened. Consequently, there are renewed efforts among the audio industry to develop technological improvements in sound recordings and their reproduction.

15 Imperfections of reproduced sound can result from, among other things, microphones which ineffectively record sound, and speakers which ineffectively reproduce recorded sound. Attempts at sound image enhancement by those in the relevant industries have resulted in methods which record and encode the positional information of a sound's origin along with the sound information itself. Such methods include the multi-channel surround systems which operate using specially encoded audio information, and special
20 decoding systems to interpret the information.

Sound enhancement systems which do not require specially recorded sound are typically less complex and much less expensive. Such systems include those which introduce unnatural time-delays or phase-shifts between left and right signal sources. Many of these systems attempt to compensate for the inability of a microphone to mimic the frequency response of a human ear. These systems may also attempt
25 to compensate for the fact that, because of the location of a speaker, the perceived direction of sound emanating from that speaker may be inconsistent with the original location of the sound. Although the foregoing systems attempt to reproduce sound in a more realistic and life-like manner, use of such methods have resulted in mixed results in the competitive audio enhancement field.

Other sound enhancement techniques operate on what are termed sum and difference signals. The
30 sum and difference signals represent the sum of left and right stereo signals, and the difference between left and right stereo signals, respectively.

It is known that boosting the level of difference signal in a pair of stereo left and right signals can widen a perceived sound image projected from a pair of loudspeakers, or other electroacoustic transducers, placed in front of a listener. The widened sound image results from amplification of ambient or reverberant
35 sounds which are present in the difference signal. This ambient sound is readily perceived in a live sound

stage at the appropriate level. In a recorded performance, however, the ambient sounds are masked by the direct sounds, and are not perceived at the same level as a live performance.

There have been many attempts to improve ambient sound information from a recorded performance by indiscriminately increasing the difference signal over a broad frequency spectrum. An indiscriminate increase in the difference signal, however, can undesirably affect a person's sound perception. For example, boosting of the difference signal in the mid-range of audio frequencies can lead to sound perception which is overly sensitive to the position of a listener's head.

A critically-acclaimed sound enhancement technique which processes the sum and difference signals is disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,748,669 and 4,866,774 both issued to Arnold Klayman, the same inventor for the invention disclosed in the present application.

As disclosed in both the '669 and the '774 patents, a sound enhancement system provides either dynamic or fixed equalization of the difference signal in selected frequency bands. In such a system, equalization of the difference signal is provided to boost the difference signal components of lower intensity without overemphasizing the stronger difference signal components. The stronger difference signal components are typically found in a mid-range of frequencies of approximately 1 to 4 KHz. These same mid-range of frequencies correspond to those which the human ear has heightened sensitivity. The various embodiments of the systems disclosed in the '669 and '774 patents also equalize the relative amplitudes of the sum signal in specific frequency bands to prevent the sum signal from being overwhelmed by the difference signal. Moreover, the level of difference-signal boost provided by the '669 and '774 enhancement systems is a function of the sum signal itself.

The specific advantages of selectively boosting the sum and difference signals in light of the human auditory response characteristics, is fully disclosed in detail in U.S. Patent No. 4,748,669 and U.S. Patent No. 4,866,774.

Even with the foregoing audio enhancement techniques, there is a need for an audio enhancement system that can provide high quality stereo image enhancement and which can meet all of the demands of the burgeoning computer multimedia market, and those of the audio and audio-visual markets in general. The stereo enhancement system disclosed herein fulfills this need.

Summary of the Invention

The apparatus and method disclosed herein for creating a wider sound image is an improvement over the related stereo enhancement systems disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,738,669 and 4,866,744, both of which are incorporated by reference as though fully set forth herein. This improved system has already achieved wide critical acclaim. For example, in the November 1994 issue of Multimedia World, one author describes the present invention as something which "looks like it's going to be the next big thing on the multimedia PC, and for good reason: It works." Moreover, with respect to the same stereo enhancement

system, the September 1994 issue of PC Gamer magazine writes: "Of all the various advances in audio technology over the past couple of years, none is as impressive."

Sound generated on multimedia computer systems is typically retrieved as digital information stored on a CD-ROM, or on some other digital storage medium. Unlike analog sound-storage media, digital sound information, and in particular stereo information, is more accurately stored across a broader frequency spectrum. The presence of this information can have a significant impact on methods of stereo enhancement. In addition, amplification or enhancement of such digitally-stored sound may tend to overdrive computer audio amplifiers or computer speakers, which may be relatively "low-power" devices. This concern is particularly relevant in the lower, i.e., bass, frequencies where over-amplification can cause amplifier "clipping," and may severely damage the low-power speakers of computer systems or television sets.

Accordingly, a stereo enhancement system is disclosed which produces a realistic stereo image projected across a larger listening area. The resulting stereo enhancement is particularly effective when applied to a pair of speakers placed in front of a listener. However, the enhancement system disclosed herein may also be used with any of the current surround-sound type systems to help broaden the overall sound image and remove identifiable point sources.

Creating an award-winning stereo sound image which envelopes the listener is accomplished through a surprisingly simplistic circuit structure. In a preferred embodiment, the stereo enhancement system comprises a circuit for isolating the ambient signal information, i.e., difference signal, and the monophonic signal information, i.e., sum signal, from left and right input source signals. The amplitude levels of the sum and difference signals may be fixed at a predetermined level or they may be manually adjusted by an operator of the stereo enhancement system. In addition, the left and right input source signals may be actual or synthetically generated stereo signals.

The ambient signal information is spectrally shaped, or equalized, to enhance the frequency components which are statistically of low-intensity. Equalization of the low-intensity ambient signal components occurs without inappropriately boosting the corresponding mid-range frequency components. In sound systems which may be unable to accommodate excessive ambient-signal gain among the bass frequencies, a high-pass filter limits the amplification of these frequency components.

Shaping of the ambient signal information enhances the reverberant sound effects which may be present in the ambient signal information but masked by more intense direct-field sounds. The equalized ambient signal information is recombined with the monophonic signal information and the left and right input signals, respectively, to generate enhanced left and right output signals.

The enhancement system disclosed herein may be readily implemented by a digital signal processor, with discrete circuit components, or as a hybrid circuit structure. Because of its unique circuit structure and accommodation of low-power audio devices, the enhancement system is particularly desirable in audio systems

which are inexpensive, those which operate with relatively low-power output signals, and those which have limited space for incorporating an enhancement system.

Brief Description of the Drawings

5 The above and other aspects, features, and advantages of the present invention will be more apparent from the following particular description thereof presented in conjunction with the following drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a schematic block diagram of a stereo enhancement system for generating a broadened stereo image from a pair of input stereo signals.

10 Figure 2 is a graphical display of the frequency response of a perspective enhancement curve applied to the difference signal stereo component.

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of a preferred embodiment of a stereo enhancement system for generating a broadened stereo image from a pair of input stereo signals.

15 Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of an alternative embodiment of a stereo enhancement system for generating a broadened stereo image from a pair of input stereo signals.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment

Referring initially to Figure 1, a functional block diagram is shown depicting a preferred embodiment of the present invention. In Figure 1, a stereo enhancement system 10 inputs a left stereo signal 12 and a right stereo signal 14. The left and right stereo signals 12 and 14 are fed to a first summing device 16, e.g., an electronic adder, along paths 18 and 20, respectively. A sum signal, representing the sum of the left and right stereo signals 12 and 14, is generated by the summing device 16 at its output 22.

20 The left stereo signal 12 is connected along a path 24 to an audio filter 28, while the right stereo signal 14 is connected along a path 26 to an audio filter 30. The outputs of the filters 28 and 30 are fed to a second summing device 32. The summing device 32 generates a difference signal at an output 34 which represents the difference of the filtered left and right input signals. The filters 28 and 30 are pre-conditioning high-pass filters which are designed to reduce the bass components present in the difference signal. A reduction in difference-signal bass components is performed in accordance with a preferred embodiment for reasons set forth below.

30 The summing device 16 and the summing device 32 form a summing network having output signals individually fed to separate level-adjusting devices 36 and 38. The devices 36 and 38 are ideally potentiometers or similar variable-impedance devices. Adjustment of the devices 36 and 38 is typically performed manually by a user to control the base level of sum and difference signal present in the output signals. This allows a user to tailor the level and aspect of stereo enhancement according to the type of sound reproduced, and depending on the user's personal preferences. An increase in the level of the sum

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signal emphasizes the audio signals appearing at a center stage positioned between a pair of speakers. Conversely, an increase in the level of difference signal emphasizes the ambient sound information creating the perception of a wider sound image. In some audio arrangements where the parameters of music type and system configuration are known, or where manual adjustment is not practical, the adjustment devices 36 and 38 may be eliminated and the sum and difference-signal levels fixed at a predetermined value.

The output of the device 38 is fed into an equalizer 40 at an input 42. The equalizer 40 spectrally shapes the difference signal appearing at input 42 by separately applying a low-pass audio filter 44, a high-pass audio filter 48, and an attenuation circuit 46 to the difference signal as shown. Output signals from the filters 44, 48, and the circuit 46 exit the equalizer 40 along paths 50, 54, and 52, respectively.

The modified difference signals transferred along paths 50, 52, and 54 make up the components of a processed difference signal, $(L-R)_p$. These components are fed into a summing network comprising a summing device 56 and a summing device 58. The summing device 58 also receives the sum signal output from the device 36, as well as the original left stereo signal 12. All five of these signals are added within the summing device 58 to produce an enhanced left output signal 60.

Similarly, the modified difference signals from the equalizer 40, the sum signal, and the original right stereo signal 14 are combined within the summing device 56 to produce an enhanced right output signal 62. The components of the difference signal originating along paths 50, 52, and 54 are inverted by the summing device 56 to produce a difference signal for the right speaker, $(R-L)_p$, which is 180 degrees out-of-phase from that of the left speaker.

The overall spectral shaping, i.e., normalization, of the difference signal occurs as the summing devices 56 and 58 combine the filtered and attenuated components of the difference signal to create the left and right output signals 60 and 62. Accordingly, the enhanced left and right output signals 60 and 62 produce a much improved audio effect because ambient sounds are selectively emphasized to fully encompass a listener within a reproduced sound stage. The left and right output signals 60 and 62 are represented by the following mathematical formulas:

$$L_{out} = L_{in} + K_1(L+R) + K_2(L-R)_p \quad (1)$$

$$R_{out} = R_{in} + K_1(L+R) - K_2(L-R)_p \quad (2)$$

It should be noted that input signals L_{in} and R_{in} in the equations above are typically stereo source signals, but may also be synthetically generated from a monophonic source. One such method of stereo synthesis which may be used with the present invention is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,841,572, also issued to Arnold Klayman and incorporated herein by reference. Moreover, as discussed in U.S. Patent No. 4,748,669, the enhanced left and right output signals represented above may be magnetically or electronically stored on various recording media, such as vinyl records, compact discs, digital or analog audio tape, or

computer data storage media. Enhanced left and right output signals which have been stored may then be reproduced by a conventional stereo reproduction system to achieve the same level of stereo image enhancement.

5 The signal (L-R), in the equations above represents the processed difference signal which has been spectrally shaped according to the present invention. In accordance with a preferred embodiment, modification of the difference signal is represented by the frequency response depicted in Figure 2, which is labeled the enhancement perspective, or normalization, curve 70.

10 The perspective curve 70 is displayed as a function of gain, measured in decibels, against audible frequencies displayed in log format. According to a preferred embodiment, the perspective curve 70 has a peak gain of approximately 10 dB at a point A located at approximately 125 Hz. The gain of the perspective curve 70 decreases above and below 125 Hz at a rate of approximately 6 dB per octave. The perspective curve 70 applies a minimum gain of -2 dB to the difference signal at a point B of approximately 2.1 KHz. The gain increases above 2.1 KHz at a rate of 6 dB per octave up to a point C at approximately 7 KHz, and then continues to increase up to approximately 20 KHz, i.e., approximately the highest frequency audible to the human ear. Although the overall equalization of the perspective curve 70 is accomplished using high-pass and low-pass filters, it is possible to also use a band-rejection filter, having a minimum gain at point B, in conjunction with a high-pass filter to obtain a similar perspective curve.

15 In a preferred embodiment, the gain separation between points A and B of the perspective curve 70 is ideally designed to be 12 dB, and the gain separation between points B and C should be approximately 6 dB. These figures are design constraints and the actual figures will likely vary from circuit to circuit depending on the actual value of components used. If the signal level devices 36 and 38 are fixed, then the perspective curve 70 will remain constant. However, adjustment of the device 38 will slightly vary the gain separation between points A and B, and points B and C. If the maximum gain separation is significantly less than 12 dB, the resulting effect is an increase in the mid-range amplification which can create an uncomfortable listening experience. Conversely, a gain separation much larger than 12 dB tends to reduce a listener's perception of mid-range definition.

20 Implementation of the perspective curve by a digital signal processor will, in most cases, more accurately reflect the design constraints discussed above. For an analog implementation, it is acceptable if the frequencies corresponding to points A, B, and C, and the constraints on gain separation, vary by plus or minus 20 percent. Such a deviation from the ideal specifications will still produce the desired stereo enhancement effect, although with less than optimum results.

25 As can be seen in Figure 2, difference signal frequencies below 125 Hz receive a decreased amount of boost, if any, through the application of the perspective curve 70. This decrease is intended to avoid over-amplification of very low, i.e., bass, frequencies. With many audio reproduction systems, amplifying an audio difference signal in this low-frequency range can create an unpleasurable and unrealistic sound image

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having too much bass response. These audio reproduction systems include near-field or low-power audio systems, such as multimedia computer systems, as well as home stereo systems.

5 The stereo enhancement provided by the present invention is uniquely adapted to take advantage of high-quality stereo recordings. Specifically, unlike previous analog tape or vinyl album recordings, today's digitally stored sound recordings contain difference signal, i.e. stereo, information throughout a broader frequency spectrum, including the bass frequencies. Excessive amplification of the difference signal within these frequencies is therefore not required to obtain adequate bass response.

10 Currently, there is a rapidly-increasing number of interactive multimedia computer systems owned by the ordinary consumer and those in business alike. These systems often contain integrated audio processors or peripheral sound devices, such as sound cards, to enhance their audio-visual effect. Sound produced by multimedia computers, and other near-field audio systems such as portable stereo systems, can be of relatively low quality because of power limitations, speaker-placement limitations, and listening-position limitations imposed by such systems. Although these limitations make near-field systems viable candidates for sound image enhancement, they also impose unique problems which must be overcome by any stereo enhancement system.

15 Specifically, a large draw of power in these systems may cause amplifier "clipping" during periods of high boost, or it may damage components of the audio circuit including the speakers. Limiting the bass response of the difference signal also helps avoid these problems in most near-field audio enhancement applications.

20 Because the bass frequencies of the difference signal are not highly boosted in accordance with a preferred embodiment, audio information in the very low frequencies will also be provided by the sum signal, $L+R$, which is of course monophonic. In near-field systems this is of no concern because bass information applied to a pair of speakers as a sum signal will create an acoustic image in between the two speakers -- precisely where the listener is expected to be. Nevertheless, the left and right signals do supply bass information and provide bass directional cues in the near-field through their corresponding amplitude levels.

25 Even if an audio system is not a near-field system, i.e. it has widely separated speakers and a large listening area, the perspective curve depicted in Figure 2 will still provide adequate low-frequency image enhancement. Specifically, bass frequencies have very large wavelengths which require a large listening area to effectively perceive a broadened bass sound image. For example, a frequency of 30 Hz has a wavelength of approximately 39 feet. A listener attempting to perceive direction in such bass frequencies would require a listening area of the same order. Consequently, stereo enhancement accomplished with the perspective curve of Figure 2 is also suitable for home stereo and other far-field applications.

30 In the absence of sum-signal equalization, stereo enhancement can be achieved, in accordance with the acoustic principles discussed herein, with a minimum of components given the proper circuit design. The

present invention, therefore, can be readily and inexpensively implemented in numerous applications including those having limited available space for housing a stereo enhancement circuit.

Figure 3 depicts a circuit for creating a broadened stereo sound image in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The stereo enhancement circuit 80 corresponds to the system 10 shown in Figure 1. In Figure 3, the left input signal 12 is fed to a resistor 82, a resistor 84, and a capacitor 86. The right input signal 14 is fed to a capacitor 88 and resistors 90 and 92.

The resistor 82 is in turn connected to an inverting terminal 94 of an amplifier 96. The same inverting terminal 94 is also connected to the resistor 92 and a resistor 98. The amplifier 96 is configured as a summing amplifier with the positive terminal 100 connected to ground via a resistor 102. An output 104 of the amplifier 96 is connected to the positive input 100 via a feedback resistor 106. A sum signal (L+R), representing the sum of the left and right input signals, is generated at the output 104 and fed to one end of a variable resistor 110 which is grounded at an opposite end. For proper summing of the left and right input signals by the amplifier 96, the values of resistors 82, 92, 98, and 106 in a preferred embodiment are 33.2 kohms while resistor 98 is preferably 16.5 kohms.

A second amplifier 112 is configured as a "difference" amplifier. The amplifier 112 has an inverting terminal 114 connected to a resistor 116 which is in turn connected in series to the capacitor 86. Similarly, a positive terminal 118 of the amplifier 112 receives the right input signal through the series connection of a resistor 120 and the capacitor 88. The terminal 118 is also connected to ground via a resistor 128. An output terminal 122 of the amplifier 112 is connected to the inverting terminal through a feedback resistor 124. The output 122 is also connected to a variable resistor 126 which is in turn connected to ground. Although the amplifier 112 is configured as a "difference" amplifier, its function may be characterized as the summing of the right input signal with the negative left input signal. Accordingly, the amplifiers 96 and 112 form a summing network for generating a sum signal and a difference signal, respectively.

The two series connected RC networks comprising elements 86/116 and 88/118, respectively, operate as high-pass filters which attenuate the very low, or bass, frequencies of the left and right input signals. To obtain the proper frequency response for the perspective curve 70 of Figure 2, the cutoff frequency, ω_c , or -3 dB frequency, for the high-pass filters should be approximately 100 Hz. Accordingly, in a preferred embodiment, the capacitors 86 and 88 will have a capacitance of .1 micro-farad and the resistors 116, 120 will have an impedance of approximately 33.2 kohms. Then, by choosing values for the feedback resistor 124 and the attenuating resistor 128 such that:

$$\frac{R_{120}}{R_{128}} = \frac{R_{116}}{R_{124}} \quad (3)$$

the output 122 will represent the right difference signal, (R-L), amplified by a gain of two. As a result of the high-pass filtering of the inputs, the difference signal at the output 122 will have attenuated low-

frequency components below approximately 125 Hz decreasing at a rate of 6 dB per octave. It is possible to filter the low frequency components of the difference signal within the equalizer 40, instead of using the filters 28 and 30 (shown in Fig. 1), to separately filter the left and right input signals. However, because the filtering capacitors at low frequencies must be fairly large, it is preferable to perform this filtering at the input stage to avoid loading of the preceding circuit.

It should be noted that the difference signal refers to an audio signal containing information which is present in one input channel, i.e., either left or right, but which is not present in the other channel. The particular phase of the difference signal is relevant when determining the final makeup of the output signal. Thus, in a general sense, the difference signal signifies both L-R and R-L, which are merely 180 degrees out-of-phase. Accordingly, as can be appreciated by one of ordinary skill in the art, the amplifier 112 could be configured so that the difference signal for the left output (L-R) appears at the output 122, instead of (R-L), as long as the difference signals at the left and right outputs are out-of-phase with respect to each other.

The variable resistors 110 and 126, which may be simple potentiometers, are adjusted by placement of wiper contacts 130 and 132, respectively. The level of difference signal present in the enhanced output signals may be controlled by manual, remote, or automatic adjustment of the wiper contact 132. Similarly, the level of sum signal present in the enhanced output signals is determined in part by the position of the wiper contact 130.

The sum signal present at the wiper contact 130 is fed to an inverting input 134 of a third amplifier 136 through a series-connected resistor 138. The same sum signal at the wiper contact 130 is also fed to an inverting input 140 of a fourth amplifier 142 through a separate series-connected resistor 144. The amplifier 136 is configured as a difference amplifier with the inverting terminal 134 connected to ground through a resistor 146. An output 148 of the amplifier 136 is also connected to the inverting terminal 134 via a feedback resistor 150.

A positive terminal 152 of the amplifier 136 provides a common node which is connected to a group of summing resistors 156 and is also connected to ground via a resistor 154. The level-adjusted difference signal from the wiper contact 132 is transferred to the group of summing resistors 156 through paths 160, 162, and 164. This results in three separately-conditioned difference signals appearing at points A, B, and C, respectively. These conditioned difference signals are then connected to the positive terminal 152 via resistors 166, 168, and 170 as shown.

At point A along the path 160, the level-adjusted difference signal from wiper contact 132 is transferred to the resistor 166 without any frequency-response modification. Accordingly, the signal at point A is merely attenuated by the voltage division between the resistor 166 and the resistor 154. Ideally, the level of attenuation at node A will be -12 dB relative to a 0 dB reference appearing at node B. This level of attenuation is implemented by the resistor 166 having an impedance of 100 kohms and the resistor 154 having an impedance of 27.4 kohms. The signal at node B represents a filtered version of the level-adjusted

difference signal appearing across a capacitor 172 which is connected to ground. The RC network of the capacitor 172 and a resistor 178 operate as a low-pass filter with a cutoff frequency determined by the time constant of the network. In accordance with a preferred embodiment, the cutoff frequency, or -3 dB frequency, of this low-pass filter is approximately 200 Hz. Accordingly, the resistor 178 is preferably 1.5 kohms and the capacitor 172 is .47 microfarads, and the drive resistor 168 is 20 kohms.

At node C, a high-pass filtered difference signal is fed through the drive resistor 170 to the inverting terminal 152 of the amplifier 136. The high-pass filter is designed with a cutoff frequency of approximately 7 KHz and a relative gain to node B of -6 dB. Specifically, the capacitor 174 connected between node C and the wiper contact 132 has a value of 4700 picofarads, and the resistor 180 connected between node C and ground has a value of 3.74 kohms.

The modified difference signals present at circuit locations A, B, and C are also fed into the inverting terminal 140 of the amplifier 142 through resistors 182, 184 and 186, respectively. The three modified difference signals, the sum signal and the right input signal are provided to a group of summing resistors 188 which are in turn connected to the amplifier 142. The amplifier 142 is configured as an inverting amplifier having a positive terminal 190 connected to ground and a feedback resistor 192 connected between the terminal 140 and an output 194. To achieve proper summing of the signals by the inverting amplifier 142, the resistor 182 has an impedance of 100 kohms, the resistor 184 has an impedance of 20 kohms, and the resistor 186 has an impedance of 44.2 kohms. The exact values of the resistors and capacitors in the stereo enhancement system may be altered as long as the proper ratios are maintained to achieve the correct level of enhancement. Other factors which may affect the value of the passive components are the power requirements of the enhancement system 80 and the characteristics of the amplifiers 104, 122, 136, and 142.

In operation, the modified difference signals are recombined to generate output signals comprised of a processed difference signal. Specifically, difference signal components found at points A, B, and C are recombined at the terminal 152 of the difference amplifier 136, and at the terminal 140 of the amplifier 142, to form a processed difference signal (L-R). The signal (L-R), represents the difference signal which has been equalized through application of the perspective curve of Figure 2. Ideally then, the perspective curve is characterized by a gain of 4 db at 7 KHz, a gain of 10 dB at 125 Hz, and a gain of -2 dB at 2100 Hz.

The amplifiers 136 and 142 operate as mixing amplifiers which combine the processed difference signal with the sum signal and either the left or right input signal. The signal at the output 148 of the amplifier 136 is fed through a drive resistor 196 to produce the enhanced left output signal 60. Similarly, the signal at the output 194 of the amplifier 142 travels through a drive resistor 198 to produce the enhanced right output signal 62. The drive resistors will typically have an impedance on the order of 200 ohms. The enhanced left and right output signals can be expressed by the mathematical equations (1) and

(2) recited above. The value of K_1 in equations (1) and (2) is controlled by the position of the wiper contact 130 and the value of K_2 is controlled by the position of the wiper contact 132.

5 All of the individual circuit components depicted in Figure 3 may be implemented digitally through software run on a microprocessor, or through a digital signal processor. Accordingly, an individual amplifier, an equalizer, etc., may be realized by a corresponding portion of software or firmware.

An alternative embodiment of the stereo enhancement circuit 80 is depicted in Figure 4. The circuit of Figure 4 is similar to that of Figure 3 and represents another method for applying the perspective curve 70 (shown in Fig. 2) to a pair of stereo audio signals. The stereo enhancement system 200 utilizes an alternative summing network configuration for generating a sum and difference signal.

10 In the alternative embodiment 200, the left and right input signals 12 and 14 are still ultimately fed into the negative input of mixing amplifiers 204 and 226. To generate the sum and difference signals, however, the left and right signals 12 and 14 are first fed through resistors 208 and 210, respectively, and into the inverting terminal 212 of a first amplifier 214. The amplifier 214 is configured as an inverting amplifier with a grounded input 216 and a feedback resistor 218. The sum signal, or in this case the
15 inverted sum signal $-(L+R)$, is generated at the output 220. The sum signal component is then fed to the remaining circuitry after being level-adjusted by the variable resistor 222. Because the sum signal in the alternative embodiment is now inverted, it is fed to a non-inverting input 224 of the amplifier 226. Accordingly, the amplifier 226 now requires a current-balancing resistor 228 placed between the non-inverting input 224 and ground potential. Similarly, a current-balancing resistor 230 is placed between an inverting
20 input 232 and ground potential. These slight modifications to the amplifier 226 in the alternative embodiment are necessary to achieve correct summing to generate the right output signal 62.

To generate a difference signal, an inverting summing amplifier 236 receives the left input signal and the sum signal at an inverting input 238. More specifically, the left input signal 12 is passed through a capacitor 240 and a resistor 242 before arriving at the input 238. Similarly, the inverted sum signal at
25 the output 220 is passed through a capacitor 244 and a resistor 246. The RC networks created by components 240/242 and components 244/246 provide the bass frequency filtering of the audio signal as described in conjunction with a preferred embodiment.

The amplifier 236 has a grounded non-inverting input 248 and a feedback resistor 250. A difference signal, $R-L$, is generated at an output 252 with impedance values of 100 kohm for the resistors 208, 210, 218, and 242, impedance values of 200 kohm for the resistors 246 and 250, a capacitance of
30 .15 micro-farads for the capacitor 244, and a capacitance of .33 micro-farads for the capacitor 240. The difference signal is then adjusted by the variable resistor 254 and fed into the remaining circuitry. Except as described above, the remaining circuitry of Figure 4 is the same as that of a preferred embodiment disclosed in Figure 3.

The entire stereo enhancement system 80 of Figure 3 uses a minimum of components to implement acoustic principles and generate award-winning stereo sound. The system 80 may be constructed with only four active components, typically operational amplifiers corresponding to amplifiers 104, 112, 136, and 142. These amplifiers are readily available as a quad package on a single semiconductor chip. Additional components needed to complete the stereo enhancement system 80 include only 29 resistors and 4 capacitors. The system 200 can also be manufactured with a quad amplifier, 4 capacitors, and only 29 resistors, including the potentiometers and output resistors. Because of its unique design, the enhancement systems 80 and 200 can be produced at minimal cost utilizing minimal component space and still provide unbelievable broadening of an existing stereo image. In fact, the entire system 80 can be formed as a single semiconductor substrate, or integrated circuit.

Apart from the embodiments depicted in Figures 3 and 4, there are conceivably additional ways to interconnect the same components obtain perspective enhancement of stereo signals. For example, a pair of amplifiers configured as difference amplifiers may receive the left and right signals, respectively, and may also each receive the sum signal. In this manner, the amplifiers would generate a left difference signal, L-R, and a right difference signal, R-L, respectively.

The perspective modification of the difference signal resulting from the enhancement systems 80 and 200 has been carefully engineered to achieve optimum results for a wide variety of applications and inputted audio signals. Adjustments by a user currently include only the level of sum and difference signals applied to the conditioning circuitry. However, it is conceivable that potentiometers could be used in place of resistors 178 and 180 to allow for adaptive equalization of the difference signal.

Through the foregoing description and accompanying drawings, the present invention has been shown to have important advantages over current stereo enhancement systems. While the above detailed description has shown, described, and pointed out the fundamental novel features of the invention, it will be understood that various omissions and substitutions and changes in the form and details of the device illustrated may be made by those skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit of the invention. Therefore, the invention should be limited in its scope only by the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A system for enhancing a pair of audio left and right stereo signals comprising:

a first high-pass filter having a first cutoff frequency, said first high-pass filter receiving said left and right stereo signals for providing modified left and right stereo signals having reduced bass information;

5 first means for isolating the ambient signal information representing the difference of said modified left and right stereo signals;

second means for isolating the monophonic signal information representing the sum of said left and right stereo signals;

10 a second high-pass filter having a second cutoff frequency greater than said first cutoff frequency, said second high-pass filter operating on said ambient signal information to provide a first modified signal;

a low-pass filter having a third cutoff frequency greater than said first cutoff frequency and less than said second cutoff frequency, said low-pass filter operating on said ambient signal information for providing a second modified signal;

15 third means for combining said first modified signal, said second modified signal, said monophonic signal information and said left signal to provide an enhanced stereo left output signal; and

fourth means for combining said first modified signal, said second modified signal, said monophonic signal information and said right signal to provide an enhanced stereo right output signal.

20 2. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said first means comprises an operational amplifier configured as a difference amplifier for combining said left and right stereo signals to isolate said ambient signal information.

3. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said first means comprises an operational amplifier configured as an inverting amplifier for combining said left stereo signal and said sum signal to isolate said ambient signal information.

25 4. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said first cutoff frequency of said first high-pass filter is in the range of 125 to 200 hz, said second cutoff frequency of said second high-pass filter is in the range of 5.6 to 8.4 khz, and said third cutoff frequency of said low-pass filter is in the range of 160 to 240 hz.

30 5. The enhancement system of Claim 1 further including attenuation means for attenuating said ambient signal information substantially across all audible frequency levels, said attenuation means connected to said third and fourth means for providing said left and right enhanced output signals comprising said attenuated ambient signal information.

6. The enhancement system of Claim 1 further including means for manually adjusting the level of said ambient signal information.

7. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said first, second, third and fourth means are operational amplifiers and said low-pass filter and said first and second high-pass filters are first-order RC filters comprising passive circuit components.

8. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said system is implemented in digital format within an audio signal processor formed as an integrated circuit.

9. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said stereo left and right signals are synthetically generated from a monophonic audio signal source.

10. The enhancement system of Claim 1 wherein said stereo left and right signals are part of an audio-visual composite signal.

11. An audio enhancement system for creating a broader stereo image from stereo left and right signals played through a pair of loudspeakers comprising:

a first amplifier receiving the left and right signals and providing a difference signal representing the difference between said left and right signals;

a second amplifier receiving the left and right signals and providing a sum signal representing the sum of said left and right signals;

a low-pass filter receiving said difference signal from said first amplifier;

a high-pass filter receiving said difference signal from said first amplifier;

a third amplifier having a first input connected to an output of said low-pass filter and connected to an output of said high-pass filter, said third amplifier having a second input connected to said left stereo signal and said sum signal, wherein said output of said low-pass filter, said output of said high-pass filter, said left signal, and said sum signal are combined by said third amplifier to generate a left composite output signal;

a fourth amplifier receiving said output of said low-pass filter, said output of said high-pass filter, said right signal, and said sum signal, wherein said output of said low-pass filter, said output of said high-pass filter, said right signal and said sum signal are combined by said fourth amplifier to generate a right composite output signal.

12. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 wherein said first, second, third and fourth amplifiers are operational amplifiers.

13. The audio enhancement system of Claim 12 wherein said operational amplifiers are formed on a semiconductor substrate.

14. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 wherein said audio enhancement system is implemented in digital format by a digital signal processor.

15. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 further comprising an attenuator for attenuating said difference signal by a fixed amount substantially across an audible frequency spectrum,

wherein said third and fourth amplifiers input said attenuated difference signal, and said left and right composite output signals comprise said attenuated difference signal.

5 16. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 further comprising a potentiometer connected between said output of said first amplifier and said low-pass and high-pass filters for adjusting the level of difference signal provided to said low-pass and high-pass filters.

17. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 further comprising a first bass filter connected between said left signal and said first amplifier, and a second bass filter connected between said right signal and said first amplifier, said first and second bass filters attenuating very low frequency components of said left and right signals.

10 18. The audio enhancement system of Claim 17 wherein said first and second bass filters have a cutoff frequency in the range of 125 to 200 hz.

19. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 wherein said low-pass filter has a cutoff frequency in the range of 160 hz to 240 hz and said high-pass filter has a cutoff frequency in the range of 5.6 Khz to 8.4 Khz.

15 20. The audio enhancement system of Claim 11 wherein said system comprises no more than four active amplifiers, no more than four capacitors and no more than 30 resistors.

20 21. A stereo enhancement system for creating a wider stereo image from a pair of stereo signals denoted as left and right input signals, said left and right input signals modified by said enhancement system and converted into sound by an electroacoustic transducer to produce an audio image, whereby the amount of stereo information present in the left and right input signals is represented by a difference signal equalling the difference between the left and right stereo signals and the amount of center stage information present in the left and right input signals is represented by a sum signal equalling the sum of the left and right stereo signals, said stereo enhancement system comprising:

25 a circuit for modifying the frequency response of said stereo information to create processed stereo information characterized by a maximum gain and a minimum gain, the gain of said processed stereo information varying with respect to the frequency component of said processed stereo information, said circuit comprising:

a first audio filter for attenuating, relative to said maximum gain, bass audio components present in said stereo information;

30 a second audio filter for attenuating, relative to said maximum gain, a mid-range of audio frequencies of said stereo information to create said processed stereo information, said mid-range of audio frequencies corresponding to those frequencies to which a human ear has increased sensitivity;

35 a first amplifier for combining said processed stereo information and said sum signal with said left input stereo signal to create an enhanced left output signal; and

a second amplifier for combining said processed stereo information and said sum signal with said right input stereo signal to create an enhanced right output signal.

22. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 21 wherein the first audio filter has a cutoff frequency in the range of 125 to 200 hertz.

5 23. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 21 wherein said circuit is constructed within a digital signal processor.

24. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 21 wherein the second audio filter comprises a low-pass filter and a high-pass filter having a cutoff frequency greater than a cutoff frequency of said low-pass filter.

10 25. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 24 wherein said cutoff frequency of said low-pass filter is within a range of 160 to 240 hz and said cutoff frequency of said high-pass filter is within a range of 5.6 to 8.4 kHz.

15 26. A stereo enhancement system for creating a wider stereo image from a pair of stereo signals denoted as left and right input signals, said left and right input signals modified by said enhancement system and converted into sound by an electroacoustic transducer to produce an audio image, whereby the amount of stereo information present in the left and right input signals is represented by a difference signal equalling the difference between the left and right stereo signals, and whereby the sum of said left and right signals is denoted as a sum signal, said stereo enhancement system comprising:

20 a circuit for normalizing the frequency response of said difference signal to create a processed difference signal characterized by a maximum gain and a minimum gain, the level of normalization applied to said processed difference signal varying with respect to the frequency component of said processed difference signal, said circuit comprising:

a first audio filter for attenuating, relative to said maximum gain, bass audio components present in said difference signal to create a first modified difference signal;

25 second and third audio filters for attenuating, relative to said maximum gain, a mid-range of audio frequencies of said first modified difference signal to create second and third modified difference signals, said mid-range of audio frequencies corresponding to those frequencies to which a human ear has increased sensitivity, said processed difference signal comprising the sum of said first, second, and third modified difference signals;

30 a first amplifier for combining said first, second and third modified difference signals with said sum signal and said left input stereo signal to create an enhanced left output signal; and

a second amplifier for combining said first, second and third modified difference signals with said sum signal and said right input stereo signal to create an enhanced right output signal.

35 27. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 26 further comprising a third amplifier for generating said difference signal and wherein said first audio filter comprises a first high-pass filter connected

between said left input signal and said third amplifier for attenuating bass components of said left input signal, and wherein said first audio filter comprises a second high-pass filter connected between said right input signal and said third amplifier for attenuating bass components of said right input signal.

5 28. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 27 wherein said first and second high-pass filters have a cutoff frequency in the range of 125 to 200 hz.

29. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 26 wherein said second audio filter is a low-pass filter having a cutoff frequency in the range of 160 to 240 hz.

30. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 26 wherein said third audio filter is a high-pass filter having a cutoff frequency in the range of 5.6 to 8.4 khz.

10 31. A method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals from left and right stereo input signals to create a broadened stereo image when said left and right output signals are played through a pair of speakers, said method equalizing ambient signal information present in left and right signals substantially across the audible frequency spectrum to create processed ambient signal information, said processed ambient signal information having a varying frequency response, said frequency response characterized by a maximum gain within the frequency range of 100 to 150 hz and above 7 khz, and said frequency response characterized by a minimum gain within the frequency range of 1680 to 2520 hz and below 30 hz.

15 32. The method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals of Claim 31 wherein separation between said maximum gain and said minimum gain is adjustable between a level of 10 decibels (dB) to 14 dB.

20 33. The method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals of Claim 31 wherein separation between said maximum gain and said minimum gain is fixed at approximately 12 dB.

34. A stereo sound recording having audio information stored thereon, said audio information reproducible to create an enhanced stereo effect, said stereo sound recording comprising:

25 a recording medium containing said audio information wherein said audio information is accessible to an audio reproduction device for creating left and right stereo output signals, said left and right output signals having a difference signal component representing the difference between the left and right output signals, said difference signal having a modified frequency response characterized by a maximum gain within a first frequency range of 100 to 150 hz and characterized by a minimum gain within a second frequency range of 1680 to 2520 hz and below a third frequency of approximately 30 hz; and

30 wherein said frequency response decreases at a rate of approximately 6 decibels per octave below said first frequency range and above said first frequency range up to said second frequency range, said frequency response increasing at a rate of approximately 6 decibels per octave above said second frequency range.

35. The stereo sound recording of Claim 34 wherein said recording medium is an analog or digital optical storage medium.

36. The stereo sound recording of Claim 34 wherein said recording medium is an analog or digital magnetic tape medium.

5

37. The stereo sound recording of Claim 34 wherein the separation between said maximum gain and said minimum gain is within the range of 10 dB to 14 dB.

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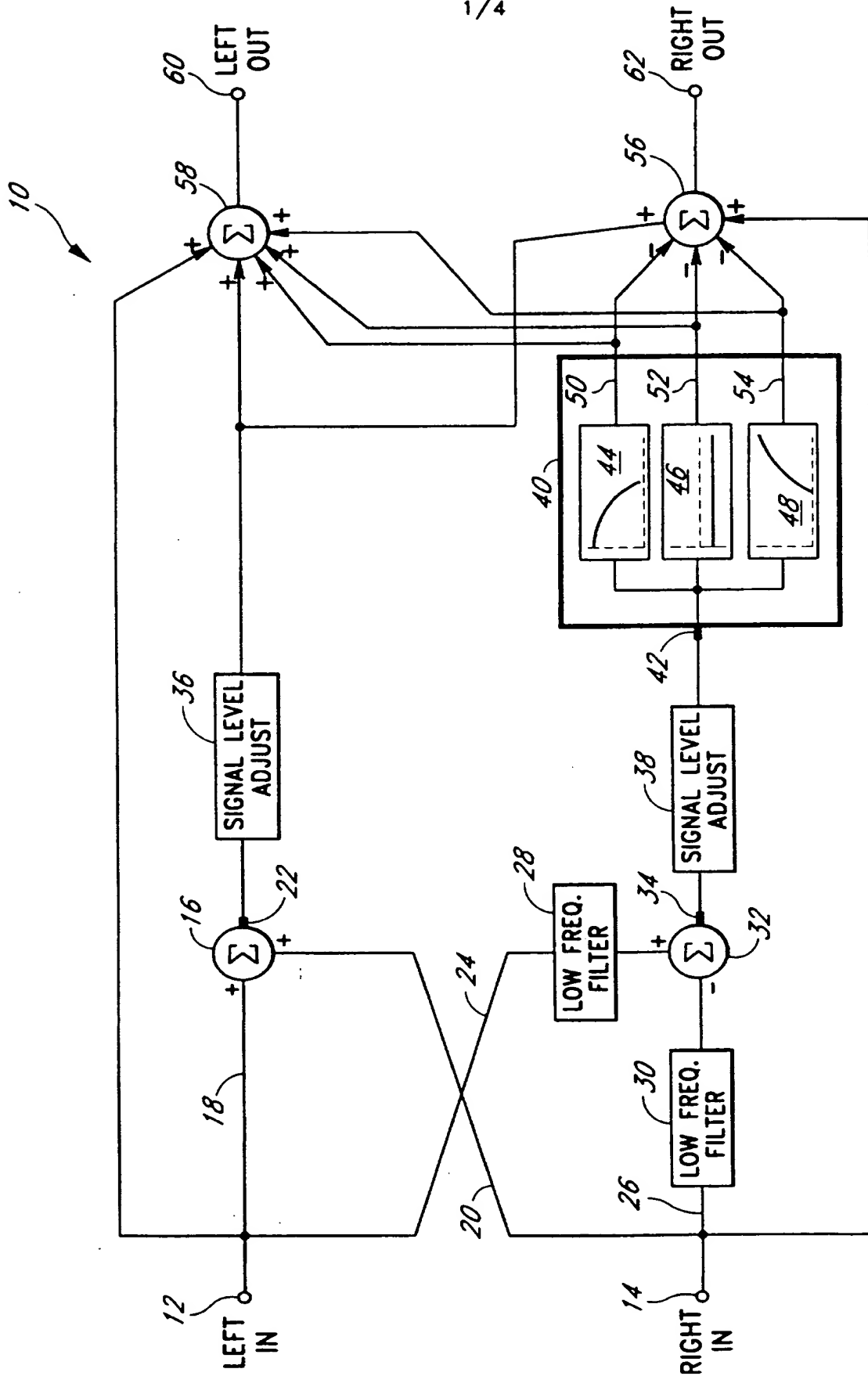
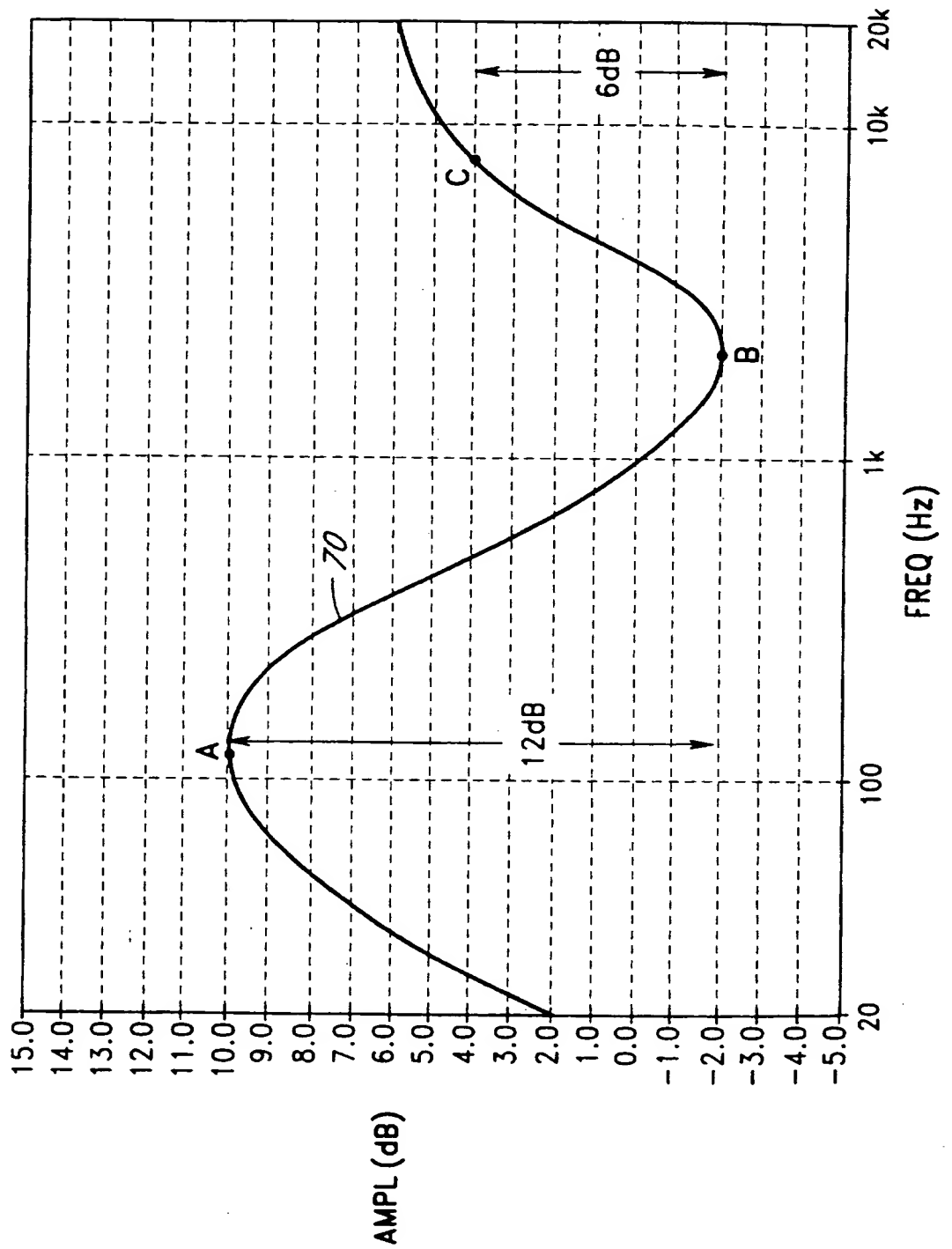


FIG. 1

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FIG. 2



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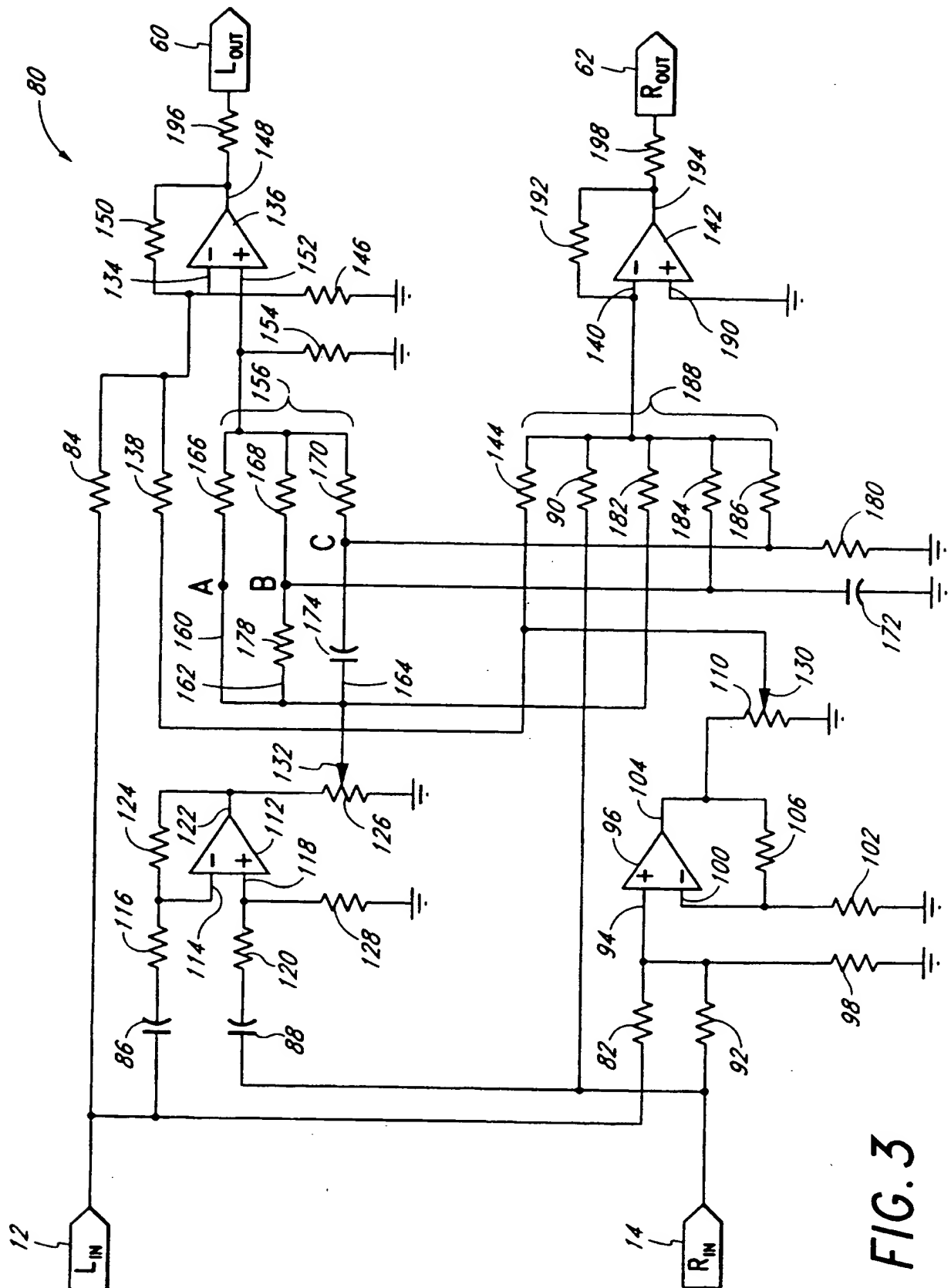
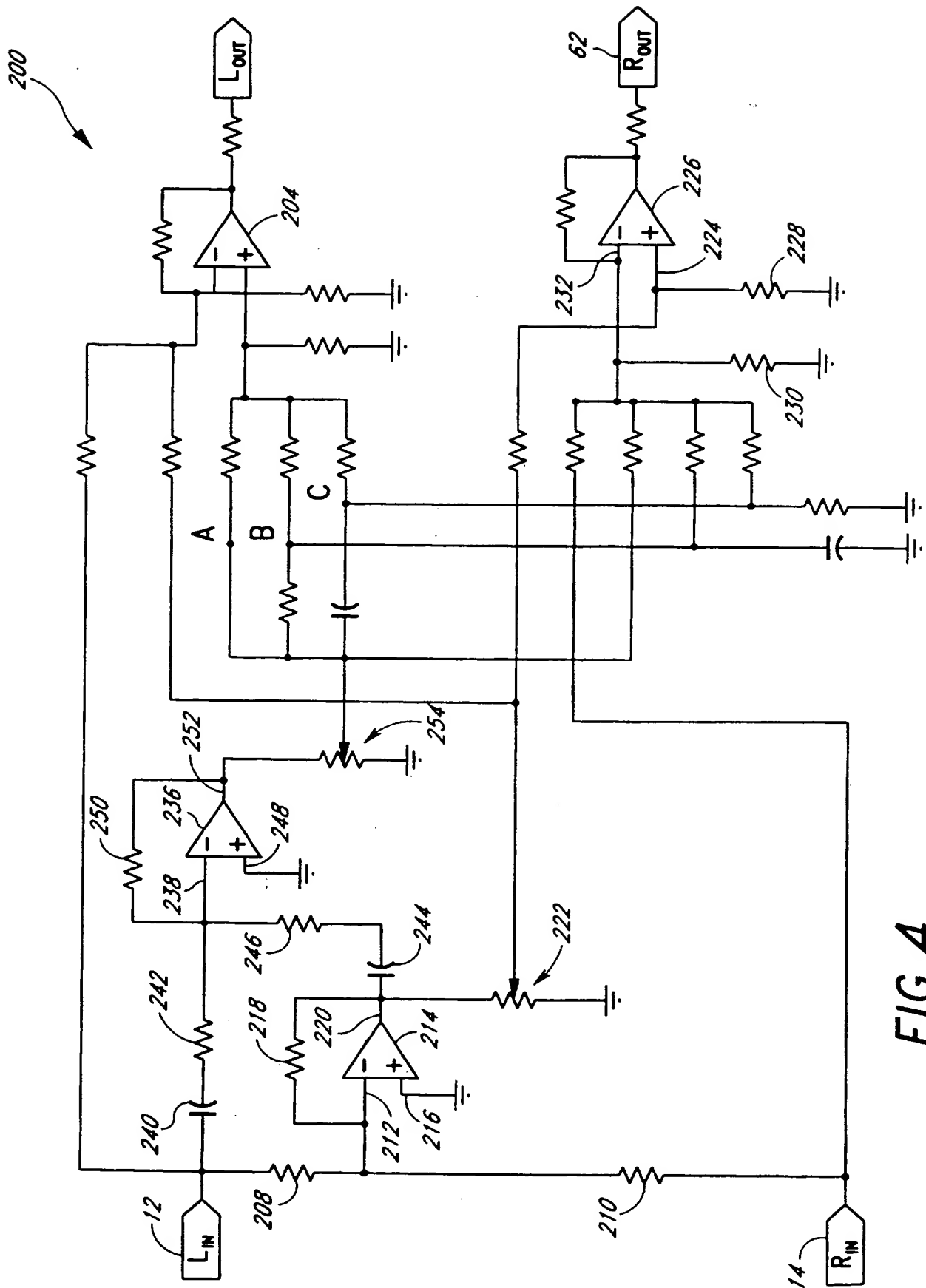


FIG. 3

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 H04S H04B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US,A,4 349 698 (IWAHARA) 14 September 1982 see column 1, line 6-11 see column 1, line 47 - column 2, line 43 see column 7, line 58 - column 12, line 12; figure 8 ---	1-7,9, 11,12, 15-22, 24-33
A	US,A,5 400 405 (PETROFF) 21 March 1995 see column 3, line 59 - column 7, line 26 see column 8, line 12-15 --- -/--	1-8, 11-33

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Zanti, P

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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PCT/US 96/05837

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US,A,5 319 713 (WALLER JR. ET AL.) 7 June 1994 see column 4, line 54 - column 8, line 55 see column 10, line 29 - column 14, line 15 ---	1-8, 11-33
A	US,A,4 219 696 (KOGURE ET AL.) 26 August 1980 see column 1, line 32-34 see column 3, line 1 - column 6, line 44 -----	1,10,11, 21,26, 31,34-37

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 96/05837

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US-A-4349698	14-09-82	JP-C- 1254855 JP-A- 56001698 JP-B- 59031279	12-03-85 09-01-81 01-08-84
US-A-5400405	21-03-95	NONE	
US-A-5319713	07-06-94	US-A- 5333201	26-07-94
US-A-4219696	26-08-80	DE-A- 2806914 GB-A- 1600885	24-08-78 21-10-81

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(71) Applicant: SRS LABS, INC. [US/US]; 2909 Daimler Street, Santa Ana, CA 92705 (US).

(72) Inventor: KLAYMAN, Arnold, I.; 16821 Phelps Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92649 (US).

(74) Agent: NATAUPSKY, Steven, J.; Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear, Suite 1600, 620 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92680 (US).

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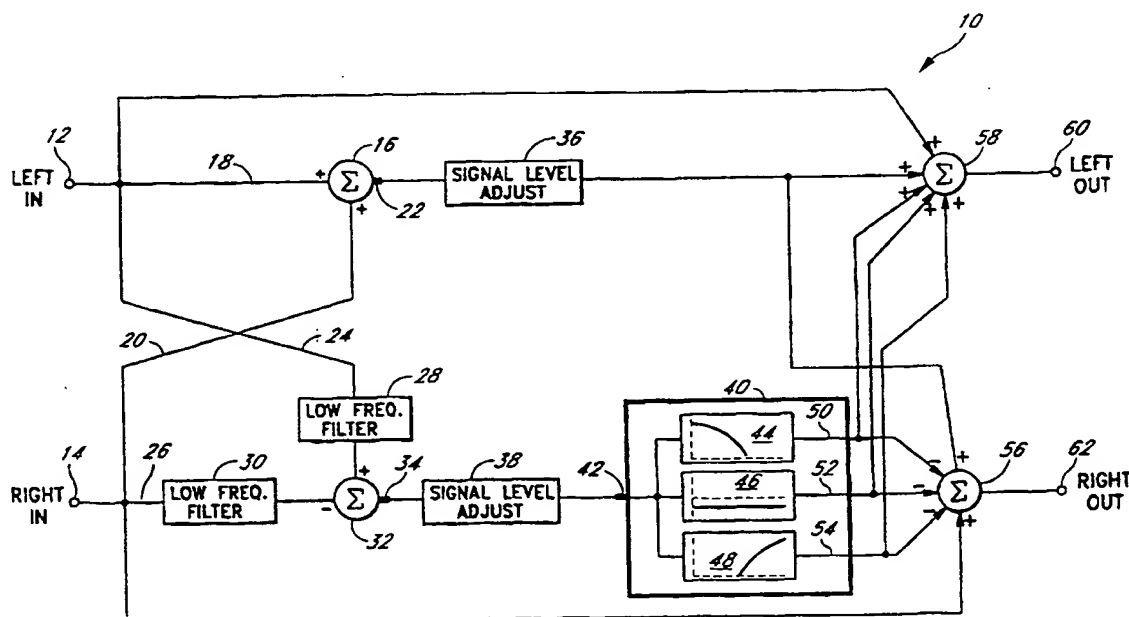
With international search report.

With amended claims.

Date of publication of the amended claims:

12 December 1996 (12.12.96)

(54) Title: STEREO ENHANCEMENT SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

A stereo enhancement system processes the difference signal component generated from a pair of left and right input signals to create broadened stereo image reproduced through a pair of speakers or through a surround sound system. Processing of the difference signal component occurs through equalization characterized by amplification of the low and high range of auditory frequencies. The processed difference signal is combined with a sum signal, generated from the left and right input signals, and the original left and right input signals to create enhanced left and right output signals.

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AMENDED CLAIMS

[received by the International Bureau on 25 October 1996 (25.10.96);
original claims 31 and 34 amended; remaining claims unchanged (1 page)]

between said left input signal and said third amplifier for attenuating bass components of said left input signal, and wherein said first audio filter comprises a second high-pass filter connected between said right input signal and said third amplifier for attenuating bass components of said right input signal.

28. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 27 wherein said first and second high-pass filters have a cutoff frequency in the range of 125 to 200 Hz.

29. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 26 wherein said second audio filter is a low-pass filter having a cutoff frequency in the range of 160 to 240 Hz.

30. The stereo enhancement system of Claim 25 wherein said third audio filter is a high-pass filter having a cutoff frequency in the range of 5.6 to 8.4 kHz.

31. A method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals from left and right stereo input signals to create a broadened stereo image when said left and right output signals are played through a pair of speakers, said method equalizing ambient signal information present in left and right signals substantially across the audible frequency spectrum to create processed ambient signal information, said processed ambient signal information having a varying frequency response, said frequency response characterized by a maximum gain within the frequency range of approximately 50 to 200 Hz and above 7 kHz, and said frequency response characterized by a minimum gain within the frequency range of approximately 1500 to 3000 Hz and below 30 Hz.

32. The method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals of Claim 31 wherein separation between said maximum gain and said minimum gain is adjustable between a level of 10 decibels (dB) to 14 dB.

33. The method of generating enhanced left and right stereo output signals of Claim 31 wherein separation between said maximum gain and said minimum gain is fixed at approximately 12 dB.

34. A stereo sound recording having audio information stored thereon, said audio information reproducible to create an enhanced stereo effect, said stereo sound recording comprising:

a recording medium containing said audio information wherein said audio information is accessible to an audio reproduction device for creating left and right stereo output signals, said left and right output signals having a difference signal component representing the difference between the left and right output signals, said difference signal having a modified frequency response characterized by a maximum gain within a first frequency range of 100 to 150 Hz and characterized by a minimum gain within a second frequency range of approximately 1500 to 3000 Hz and below a third frequency of approximately 30 Hz; and

wherein said frequency response decreases at a rate of approximately 6 decibels per octave below said first frequency range and above said first frequency range up to said second frequency range, said frequency response increasing at a rate of approximately 6 decibels per octave above said second frequency range.

